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INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

OF

ROCK ISLAND



MAIN AVENUE, ROCK ISLAND PRISON.

BY

J. W. MINNICH, ~~Grand Isle, La.~~

SUPPLEMENTED WITH SKETCH BY

MRS. KATE E. PERRY-MOSHER,  
Covington, Ky.

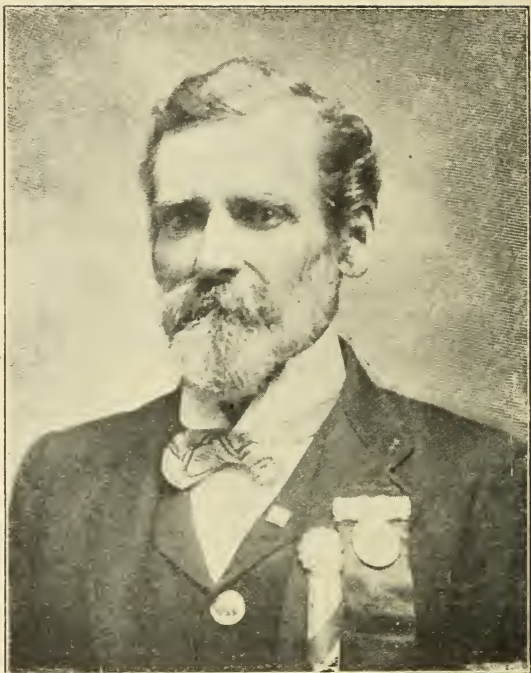


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J. W. MINNICH.

# INSIDE OF ROCK ISLAND PRISON

FROM

DECEMBER, 1863, TO JUNE, 1865.

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By J. W. MINNICH,

GRAND ISLE, LA.

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# ROCK ISLAND PRISON.

REPORT OF EIGHTEEN MONTHS' EXPERIENCES.

BY J. W. MINNICH, GRAND ISLE, LA.

I HAVE been called upon and urged by comrades and friends in the North as well as the South (who were not comrades) for nearly forty years to tell the story of my life in Rock Island Prison during a residence of eighteen months of 1864 and 1865 in Barrack No. 47.

I have always refused to make public the conditions under which we were held there from December, 1863, to the last days of June, 1865. I refused to make public what I know, saw, heard, and, with over twelve thousand others, was subjected to during my eighteen months' stay inside the prison, because I did not wish to keep alive the fires of sectional hatred which the war and its causes had engendered. Besides, in so doing I must perforce humiliate the men of my own blood and kin who wore the blue throughout the four long-drawn-out bloody years of that stupendous fratricidal strife—men who wore their uniforms honorably and who entertained a hearty respect for their opponents in gray, albeit they could not consent to a dismemberment of the Union under any pretext. Nor would I consent at this late day to strike back were it not that there are many of the swash-bucklers of that far-away time still above ground who have not as yet shown the least symptoms of having outgrown their hatred of all things Southern, and who are still singing the old worn-out song of the "Bloody Shirt;" men who, either in ignorance of the truth or whose hatred of Southerners will not allow them to acknowledge the truth, though it were writ in letters of fire, persist in rehashing the calumnies of that period when passions were at boiling heat.

Many men who still insist upon the truth of the charges

made against the Confederate authorities of cruelty to Union prisoners in Southern prisons, and the many crimes laid at the door of unfortunate Henry Wirz and for which on perjured testimony he was hanged like any ordinary murderer, as well as the complicity of General Winder in all the crimes imputed to Wirz, notwithstanding the fact that Winder was discharged for want of evidence, and since the Grand Army Convention at Minneapolis saw fit to ignore the truth, and brought prominently before the public again those exploded charges with the view of attempting to perpetuate them to the dishonor of a man whom, in order to convict, the prosecution was forced to the basely criminal expedient of suborning witnesses on whose perjured testimony Wirz was condemned and hurried to execution within six days, lest by any possible chance the *truth* concerning the quality of the evidence against him become known to the public, and thereby raise a doubt as to the justness of his conviction (for once dead, he could not ask for a new trial, "based on newly discovered evidence"—like those other two unfortunates, Mrs. Surratt and Herrold, hurried to an unjust doom), impel the motive to recorded truth and justice.

Because of these things and the reiteration of those charges by the G. A. R. Convention at Minneapolis, by which the South is still being held up to the gaze of this and future generations as a people devoid of humanity as Kurd or Cossack, I am led to tell something about the other side of the picture. I shall confine myself strictly to what came under my own personal observation, and without drawing on hearsay except in confirmation of facts stated. Then I will leave it to the judgment of the unprejudiced wherein lay the greater responsibility as between a people whose resources had been drained by over three years' war, with a large part of their territory in the hands of an invading hostile force, with lines of communications severed, and almost totally cut off from communication with the outside world, who could not give a decent ration to the men who were guarding the prisoners within their limits, much less of food and clothing to the armies in the field struggling against double their own numbers; or, on the other hand, a people who had every facility



to draw on the world for all their requirements, with fields untouched by the ravages of war, with granaries full, and with every industry unchecked, who knew naught of devastated fields, blackened ruins of homes and factories, of the desperate silent battle against hollow-eyed, grim-visaged starvation and need in every walk and stage of life, from the ragged soldier in the field to the infant at its mother's emaciated breast and tottering old age. And yet this people, claiming the highest civilization, erudition, and lofty human principles, saw fit through its administrative representatives to fall back on the barbarous practice long past of punishing those who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands as prisoners of war for revenge because of alleged cruelty to their own men in Confederate prisons. Suppose that unnecessary harshness had been inflicted upon Federal prisoners by subordinates, would that fact have justified such measures of "retaliation" as were resorted to by the Washington administration? And that, too, at the very time when Captain Wirz was complaining to the government of the quality of the "bread" furnished to the prisoners, and asking that the meal be bolted before issuance, in order to increase its value in bulk to each man.

His letter to that effect is dated June 6, 1864. And on the following 10th the retaliatory order of Secretary of War Stanton was put in force in Northern prisons—at least, it was in Rock Island Prison. Whatever may have been lacking of a full ration prior to that date was not a serious privation, for we had become accustomed in the field to not feel the lack of one, two, or even three meals in succession. But then the conditions were different.

Whatever we say on this subject, we must be fair and adhere strictly to the truth as we know it from personal experience and not from hearsay. Prior to the 10th of June, 1864, those who had friends within the Union lines were allowed to receive boxes or packages of edibles such as are not furnished to troops by their governments—dainties of all kinds. But after the 10th of June all boxes that arrived containing edibles were opened and the contents sent to the hospitals, so they said; but such packages as contained clothing only were ad-

mitted. Up to that date any one who had money could buy from the sutler for the post, a man named Dart. So far as I know, he was a fair man. We could not go to the sutler's, but he would make almost daily visits inside the prison with a wagon loaded with such things as the prisoners wanted; but after the date above he did not come into the prison again until one or two days before the following Christmas. But of that later on. Thus we were cut off from receiving all edibles from friends outside, deprived of the right to purchase from the sutler or any other source, and our rations reduced to fourteen ounces of bread and twelve ounces of fresh beef per day and one quart of hominy to a man for ten days, and just at the beginning of summer, when the river from which we pumped our supply of water into two large cisterns sank into the ground in the main avenue. The river was already near its lowest stage and declining rapidly under the broiling summer's sun, and the water was turning in color from clear to a muddy green, and later on during the hot days of July and August was unfit to drink. Ugh! seems as if its odor of river moss is still hanging around.

But work was well under way toward the sinking of an artesian well; and when the river was at its lowest and the water had reached the lowest degree of nauseousness, good, pure water was struck at a depth of twelve hundred feet, more or less, and a pump installed. From that time on we had good water, but not an oversupply. Two men were detailed from daylight, or roll call in the morning, to pump until noon, two others then taking their places until night. Owing to the number of barracks and men (over 8,000) to be supplied, only one bucket was allowed to each man coming to the well. Each had his turn, and often during the hottest part of the day there would be from each of the barracks a line of buckets strung out in every direction leading to the pump. No two men could stand this constant six hours' strain at the pump. Therefore they were often relieved by those coming for water, one on each side agreeing to pump their own buckets full and then giving way to the next two, and so on until the pumpers were rested. For this supply of water *due credit must be given.*

But summer diseases, incident to the use of the almost stagnant river water and the suffering caused by the sudden reduction of the rations to a point merely sufficient to sustain life, had already obtained a foothold among the men, and the sick list ran into the thousands. The fresh beef was generally as good as could be expected. But the quantity to each man after cooking (boiling was the never-varying mode of cooking) may easily be determined when it is considered at twelve ounces "gross weight" to a man. My own ration (and it was the average) amounted to from four to six bites, very rarely more, and depending on the toughness or tenderness of the meat. We soon learned that there was more solid sustenance in a marrow bone (joint) than in a ration of meat, and it gave rise to quarrels for its possession until in our barrack a rule was adopted (and I believe the rule became general) that whenever the coveted "bone of contention" fell to a "mess" each member in his turn received it. Carefully denuded of all meat and gristle, if it happened to be "full grown," the recipient would take his bone, chop it as fine as possible, and "boil it down" in saucepans manufactured from canteens or burnt-out stovepipe; and then, if he had good teeth, nothing would remain of that bone that strong teeth could crush.

But we did not always lose the soup (beef water). The fat was carefully skimmed off and the water, when not too salty to drink, dipped out and set away to cool to drink later, and every third day a portion of the hominy was added, and we had "hominy soup." That was feast day. But we did not have fresh beef continually; better if we had. After a while our diet was changed. They gave us for a change about the same amount gross weight of "mess beef." Some of it was fair to middling, sometimes good; but sometimes, and often, green with age and odorous to a degree; and our ration of good white bread (it was good bread) was changed to a square fourteen ounces of solid corn bread made of yellow corn with a taste of lye from too much soda or saleratus in it so strong that it made it unfit to eat. I saw men vainly endeavor to eat it. Always a great eater myself and ravenous as my appetite was, my stomach often revolted

against it, and it was only during the latter part of the twenty-four hours between rations that I could bring myself down to the task of putting it away without an eruption taking place. Then again we were given "slabside" bacon, half a pound to a man (so they said) gross weight. Some of it was good as slab sides go, but very often it was very inferior and strong enough to "stand alone."

Months of this salt diet and lye corn bread, and then scurvy became epidemic—hundreds of cases, and nothing wherewith to combat the disease. Men walked around with mouths so sore that they could not eat, and their teeth actually dropping out with the attempt; others with limbs green and distorted. I remember one case particularly in Barrack 44. We had doctors who did the best they could, and I believe tried their best to render all aid, and I am not blaming them. I do not believe there was indifference on the part of the medicos at the post. I simply state the conditions as they existed. At last the disease made such ravages that it came to the knowledge of citizens of Rock Island City and aroused their sympathies. This is hearsay [This is historical fact. See United States war record reports on Rock Island Prison. The cruel treatment of prisoners by the commandant, Colonel Johnson, and their pitiable condition aroused the sympathies of the citizens of Rock Island to such an extent that they brought the matter before Mr. Lincoln, who ordered an investigation that resulted in a measure to relieve the situation of its horrors.—Ed.], and they set about inaugurating measures of relief by subscription of such vegetables as could be had at that season of the year. All honor to them! I do know that each man afflicted with scurvy was given raw Irish potatoes to eat as a curative, and was told that those potatoes had been subscribed by citizens of Rock Island City; and further, that with the coming of the potatoes to the sick the scurvy began to lose its grip and was finally extinguished. How long it prevailed, I cannot remember, as I was myself under the weather (though not from scurvy) a goodly part of the time, and took no note of time or events. Neither can I remember that any but the sick were supplied with the potatoes.

From the foregoing some may say that we were not so bad off for rations after all. I will admit it might have been worse, but will not admit that it should have been as bad as it was. At first sight it has not such a bad face; but take a lot of men with healthy appetites who are accustomed to at least one square meal in a week, reveling in good health, and confine them within restricted limits, cut off from all outside associations, and limit them to a loaf of bread which baked could be pressed into a pint cup by hand and not be over level full (I saw that done in my barrack, No. 47) and twelve ounces gross weight of beef or equal weight of mess beef or eight (?) ounces gross weight of bacon, a quart of dry hominy every ten days and for six months on a stretch without a break, and then say that they should not feel that most terrible of afflictions—hunger! I know what it means, and I saw others who felt it even more than myself, as well as some who did not seem to feel it at all. One of these was in my barrack—Joe Todd, of South Carolina. But Joe was a freak.

As to quarters, we were housed in barracks about eighteen feet wide by about seventy to eighty feet long, with three tier bunks on each side and at the ends and three tiers or three bunks in the kitchen at the back, or lower end, separated from the main room by a partition of upright boards. Each barrack had accommodations for about one hundred men. These barracks would have been comfortable in the South. Even there they were all that could be desired in the summer; but they were not comfortable during the winter, being built of one-inch upright boards of green and unseasoned lumber with three-inch strips over the cracks that shrank in the summer sun, leaving large openings for the cold winter winds to enter. We had two coal stoves in the main room, and with one exception, owing to a snow blockade or from some other cause, had sufficient coal to keep warm by huddling around the stoves; but never could generate heat enough to warm the room during the blizzards so common in that latitude, although the stoves were kept at a red heat.

One may form an idea of the intense cold when it is stated that at one time during the winter of 1864-65 the frost never

melted from the windows within *nine feet of the stove for a whole week*, and from the last week of February up to the 10th of March, 1864, it was almost as cold, which to men reared in the South was a hard experience, to say the least, especially when we lacked sufficient clothing, which was the lot of the majority. As for myself, I was captured in East Tennessee on the 27th of January in my shirt sleeves, a light cotton undershirt, with a captured knit woolen overshirt, and many were no better off and some even less warmly fitted. Our barracks had good tar paper roofs, and we were protected from the rain, sleet, and snow, if not from the biting frosts. True, we were given clothing (coats to those who had none, of ancient army tunics, discarded pattern of blue-black cloth, almost black, with light blue beadings) and *one single gray blanket to each man*. In order to obtain the most possible comfort from the least possible material, I had sewn together the edges of a dog tent, which by some fortunate chance had come into my hands at Louisville, and had gathered enough leaves into it to make an excuse for a mattress, which, with my bunkmate's blanket and my own, enabled us to enjoy some comforts that others did not possess. Altogether, while we could sleep at times only by bunking on the floor around the stoves, we might have been worse off, and in all things better off.

When Christmas day came nearer, we learned that for once our old friend the sutler would be allowed to come in and give us a treat for Christmas—*i. e.*, sell us flour; nothing else, however. We were naturally anxious to get flour, not having had any white bread for a long time, to say nothing of our hunger. Christmas eve came, and with it came Dart with two wagons loaded, and expecting to reap a rich harvest, having laid in a large stock for the occasion. But he had not told us beforehand that he had raised the price from \$2.50 per quarter barrel to \$4, and great was his surprise when he found he could not dispose of a single sack among the hundreds of hungry men that crowded around his wagons. Argument was useless. I heard one man tell him: "I have money and could buy all I want, so have others; but there are hundreds of others who cannot at that price, and I won't set the price. If



you'll let us have it at the old price (\$2.50), we'll buy; but if not, you can take it out. We are hungry, but we won't be held up for any such price."

Dart communed with himself for a bit, then turned slowly toward the lower gate, and drove out, followed by hundreds of hungry eyes. But not one single man asked him to stop. A principle was at stake. The men who could afford to buy refused simply because hundreds of their comrades who could have bought a fourth or an eighth at the old figure could not buy at the new rate of \$16 per barrel, when it was worth only \$8 in the market. I shall not repeat what Colonel Johnson said about it, because I could not vouch for its truth, since I did not hear him. Yet we were hungry. Stray (?) dogs were "requisitioned." Rats were also eagerly hunted, and in our barrack all points of egress from under our barrack were carefully blocked, leaving only one exit beneath each window, and then men would station themselves at the window with a "gig;" and if a rat stuck his head out, the gig would descend like a flash of lightning, and—well, sometimes over-eagerness caused the hunter to miss, and then no rat stew for him.

I helped "hide" two dogs—one an old long-eared hound, the other Dart's faithful and ever-watchful bulldog, whose round head did duty afterwards as a football, and in that capacity traveled over a large part of the prison, finally by an awkward kick being sent across the dead line, where none dared venture. And that recalls the hardest part of the tale. We read on a tablet erected by the Woman's Relief Corps of the G. A. R. at Andersonville: "May 2, 1864, a poor one-legged prisoner who placed one hand on the dead line while reaching for the crutches fallen from his feeble grasp was mortally wounded, shot by a Rebel sentinel." Knowing something about "dead lines" myself, I would ask those ladies how it happened that this soldier's "crutches" (which means *both* crutches) fell across the dead line?

I remember reading of that or a similar incident when Wirz was on trial, with illustration, in *Harper's* blasphemously lying sheet, if I'm not mistaken, and it was charged up against Wirz at his condemnation. Only then it was stated that "the

soldier had *stumbled and fell on the dead line*, and was shot as he essayed to recover himself by the Rebel guard." Now I would suggest to the ladies who erected that tablet that, in all fairness to that "Rebel sentinel," they in the interests of truth and unbiased history revise the phraseology of that inscription and give him (the "Rebel sentinel") due credit. Get the yarn straight, and give the name of that unfortunate soldier. I remember, too, that the name of that unfortunate could not be learned at the time that Wirz was on trial, although it was *stated* that Wirz's counsel had demanded it, and was turned down by the prosecution with the declaration that the court would accept the allegation as having been proved by "competent and reliable witness" (?).

Some things are not easily forgotten. I remember also that while Wirz was in prison, and the newspapers were manufacturing a character to saddle him with and hunting up witnesses to swear his life away at any and all costs, on the last Sunday in June, accompanied by my mother, I called upon some old-time neighbors whom I had not seen for a full dozen years (and with whose sons and daughters I had attended the same school during two sessions), and there met their oldest son, who had been a lieutenant in a Pennsylvania regiment, and who had passed seven months in Andersonville and was supposed to know something about the occurrences there. The papers were full of Wirz and his atrocities, and, having read so much about him, I was glad to meet one who had been under his charge. But so strong was my fear of the revelation of a probable disagreeable truth, and having seen nothing but the most radical Northern papers for seventeen months, consequently only one side of a story of "horrors," that I almost feared to broach the subject, lest the accusations heralded abroad to every corner and nook of the civilized world should be confirmed by an eyewitness in whose entire reliability I had every confidence. At last I broached the subject thus: "How long were you in Andersonville, Jim?" "Seven months," he replied. "Well, now I wish you would tell me the truth about that place. Was it really as bad as the papers say it was?" "No, it wasn't. It was bad, of course. We did not have the shelter we needed because we were too



many, and we did not have food enough nor medicines for our sick; but I guess they didn't have enough themselves."

I then asked him if what was said about Captain Wirz was true. His answer came instantly: "Not that I know of." Just then a neighbor came in, and our conversation was interrupted. But that was his last word, "Not that I know of," and yet he had been a prisoner under Wirz seven months. Some one may ask: "Who was this lieutenant?" I answer: "Lieut. James Hastings, oldest brother of ex-Gov. Dan Hastings, of Pennsylvania."

Our ways separated there that day. I have never met him since, and do not know whether he is still living or not. That is one part of the tale, and gives the lie direct to Tablet No. 1 at Andersonville. And while we are asked to allow those *lies* to stand unrefuted in our midst at our very doors, the G. A. R. goes into spasms on learning that it is proposed to erect a monument to Wirz with a true history of the man and his office inscribed thereon, that those who come after and read may know the truth as it is revealed in the records. But even if all that was charged were true, would that justify the retaliatory measures adopted by the North?

No doubt there are thousands—aye! hundreds of thousands—of old soldiers of the G. A. R. and throughout the North, and in the South as well, who are totally ignorant of the truth as to the real conditions existing at the military prisons, both in the North and the South. On the one side there was an utter inability to properly care for the prisoners. Will any man endowed with a modicum of reasoning power or a spark of the spirit of fairness stand up to-day and say that the South could properly care for the 180,000 prisoners held by her in 1864-65, when it is a world-known fact that she could not care for her own men in the field and less properly for her sick?

On the other hand, it is a well-established fact that in the North every facility existed for the proper care of prisoners, both well and sick; and if those prisoners were subjected to any undue hardships, it was simply because the broad spirit of Christianity was lacking. This was proven by the retaliatory measures put in force in 1864. And we are treated

to the spectacle of the executive and administrative power of a great and Christian people wreaking a base revenge on prisoners in their hands because of the unavoidable ills suffered by their own, for whose relief and well-being *they themselves would not raise a hand*, and to whom they refused every measure of relief which lay in their power to command.

It would not be fair to charge this lack of succor to the *people* of the North. *They did not know*. All the measures of relief proposed by the Confederate government were carefully hidden away from the public, and were not unearthed until long after the principal actors in this bloody drama and cold-blooded conspirers against humanity had passed from the stage of life. But the blot remains, black and damning. In the meantime, as a cloak to hide their own responsibility, the condition of Federal prisoners in the South was held up to the gaze of Northern people in the newspapers and periodicals with pictures of horrors inconceivable, as illustrating the "fiendishness of Jeff Davis and his government." But not one word about the measures proposed by Jeff Davis to the Washington authorities to send relief to their men in the Southern prisons and his guarantee that that relief should be given by their own doctors and only to their own men for whom it was intended. And it was also carefully hidden from the Northern public that their own government had refused absolutely to send a single doctor, bottle of medicine, pound of provisions, or a single coat or shirt; nor did it let them know that in August, 1864, Judge Ould proposed to deliver all the sick at Andersonville to the Washington government if they would but send transports to Savannah to carry them North without an equivalent in exchange. The offer was accepted. But in order to prevent these men from reaching their homes (scattered throughout the North from Maine to the Rocky Mountains) before the election held in November, no transports were sent to Savannah *until in December*; while in the meantime hundreds of these poor, sick, unfortunate prisoners, hurried from Andersonville as soon as possible after this agreement had been reached, died during the long waiting for transportation.

What a picture to hold up to the gaze of the world—a

government of civilized people letting its sick die by the hundreds rather than have them brought home to tell their friends that they had been released without pledge or condition because their half-starved captors could not give them the care they needed on account of their own poverty, and the fact that their government in whose defense they had bared their breasts to the storms of war and all its privations and horrors literally refused to allow any relief to be sent them in their deep distress! Had they been sent for immediately and the truth through them become known to the Northern people, it would have put a powerful weapon into the hands of the opponents of the administration and would have put Mr. Lincoln's candidacy in jeopardy. "They must not be brought North until after the election," was the secret order of Stanton. No! let them die rather than the truth be known.

O, the black, damning shame of it! And all the while those unfortunates were dying by scores, waiting for the ships that never came. No stone was left unturned by the administration's organs to impress upon the Northern public the fact that the whole responsibility for the "horrible sufferings of our poor men in those Rebel hell holes" rested solely with the "fiendish Rebels." Thousands may ask: "Could such things have been?" If you doubt, go to the records. There is the record of those bare, cold, hard facts, and they speak with an eloquence which no tongue or pen may surpass.

But what has this to do with the prisons in the North? What happened in them was but the sequence of all this vituperation and calumny directed against Jeff Davis and his government. Rock Island alone shall be written of here. The garrison at Rock Island when I was there consisted of a part, or whole perhaps, of the 4th Regiment of the Reserve Corps, Col. A. J. Johnson commanding the post, the 108th Negro Regiment from Kentucky, and the 43d Iowa "Graybeards;" and after the latter were sent to Memphis, near the close of 1864, they were replaced by the 192d Illinois. The officers and noncommissioned officers of the 4th Reserve Corps acted as inside or duty officers, and as a rule they were decent in their treatment of us. I have no complaint to lay against them. They were veterans. Of the "Graybeards,"

I have no complaint to make as far as I know personally, except against two of their officers, Captain Hogendoble (dubbed the "Hogdriver" by the boys for his meanness), sometimes the provost marshal, and a lieutenant named Graham. These two were almost inseparable, and when not on duty would always be together, and were about as congenial a pair of brutes as could be found. They hated a Rebel as much as Colonel Johnson himself, abusing the prisoners upon any occasion and without provocation. Brutal tyrants both of them and cowards, for no brave man will insult, abuse, and strike a prisoner when he knows that it is death for the prisoners to strike back.

Hogendoble and Graham did both. I myself felt the stings of Hogendoble's tongue and the blow of his coward's fist because he was accidentally hit by our ball during a game, for which he would accept neither apology nor excuse; but, like the coward he was, applying to me every vile epithet that would come to his base mind, while trying to strike me in the face with his clinched fist and then threatening me with his pistol because I would not stand up and meekly take his blows.

His foul epithets, with his revolver thrust almost against my face and a threat to blow my "d—d brains out" if I did not stand up and take the blows aimed at my face, were more than I could quietly submit to; and, notwithstanding I was looking squarely into the muzzle of his pistol, which just then seemed to have a bore as big as a Gatling gun, I turned my head and caught the blow on my ear. This, coupled with the expression "notion to blow your d—d head off," was more than human nature could endure in silence; and, looking him fairly in the eyes, I flung some of his own choice epithets back at him: "Shoot, d—n you! Shoot, you coward! I can't help myself. I apologized for the ball having struck you unintentionally, and you will accept neither apology nor excuse. Now shoot!" He stared at me a bit after I had relieved myself, and then with another string of curses ordered me to follow him, which I did. Not knowing his intentions, and at that particular moment, with my blood boiling, not much caring, he led the way outside to the guardhouse,

and ordered that I be ornamented with a ball and chain "for a month." I was well satisfied to get off so cheaply. We had a trick of unlocking fetters at night, though ostensibly we were never without them.

It was but a short while after that the "Graybeards" were sent to Memphis to participate in the drubbing given them by Forrest. And news came to us that the "Hogdriver" had received a Rebel's bullet in the hindquarter, which would for some time oblige him to take his meals standing.

That was my own experience with Hogendoble; but stories were rife of his many mean acts toward other prisoners and well authenticated. But I can mention only what I saw and remember fully. With Graham I never came in contact; but I saw one victim of his wrath with the marks on his face, and obtained the particulars from his barrack mates as well, and this was the way of it: Graham, accompanying the orderly who called the roll one morning (I believe he was "officer of the day" that day), found fault with one of the men in the line and ordered him to "stand straight and dress the line." The prisoner was quite unwell, barely able to be on his feet, and inclined forward instead of standing erect. This was not considered by Graham, who with an oath again ordered the poor devil to straighten up; and not being obeyed in a manner to suit him, he seized the man by the collar, jerked him out of the ranks, struck him with his fist, forced him to the floor, and kicked him on the body and head, all the while cursing him with anything that came to his foul mouth. Graham was an inveterate gambler, and took loss with a bad grace. On one occasion when he was playing with some of the boys in one of the barracks he lost. Here let me say that we had gamblers among us in prison as well as in the field, and they generally had money. Some of the officers would come in for a game of poker occasionally, and very often were worsted. So in this case Graham and Hogendoble came out losers. Graham had put up his last dollar; and seeing that he had lost, he sprang to his feet, accusing the others of being "cheats," raked in the stakes, put them in his pocket, and stalked out. Although this is "hearsay," I had it from some of the players in the game.

In contrast I will cite another case which happened in the same barrack and with some, if not all, of the same players. Lieut. Ben Wagner, of the 4th Reserves, was also a gambler. "Big Ben," as we familiarly called him, who always had a kind word and smile for every one, was playing one day, and was "cleaned out," to use his own laughing expression, as I heard him myself. He had staked his fine gold watch and chain and a fine ring, and lost—rather he had lost "on tick:" after losing his ready cash, he left his watch, chain, and ring as security for the debt. We did not see "Big Ben" again for some time except on duty. Then one day he came in and redeemed the articles he had left "in soak." This is merely offered as an offset to the other case. But Big Ben Wagner was a man, and more, a humane man and gentleman, and it would be a pleasure to meet him anywhere again.

There were others—Lieutenant Layton, who had charge of our correspondence and kept our cash when any came in letters, giving us a receipt for it, which was the equivalent of cash with the sutler for any kind of goods *except food after June 10, 1864*. Layton was always a gentleman in his dealings with us within the range of my knowledge and experience. Captain Lawrence was the commissary, and was always gentlemanly in his dealings with us. Captain Robinson, who replaced Hogendoble as provost marshal, was a gentleman and most considerate, one of the kind one is glad to meet in after years. Of Lieutenant Colonel Carraher I have not a word to say in condemnation. Some may, and no doubt did; but from what I myself heard I think he was unjustly censured; and if at times he appeared to act with undue severity (and I never knew of his having done so), it must be borne in mind that he was himself under the orders of a man who showed us no consideration whatever, as is indicated by his reply to critics and accusers dated November 23, 1864. But of that later.

On one occasion, when some of the boys were complaining to Colonel Carraher of the hardships imposed upon us by the retaliatory measures of the government and the injustice of putting us on half-starvation rations, I was listening and heard all that was said, and I heard his answer, which marked



him as being either a man of humane impulses or a consummate hypocrite. How well I remember! "Yes, boys, I know it's hard; and if I could help it, I would; but I'm only second in command, and I must obey orders as well as you. I can't change it." And a subsequent action of his only confirmed the good opinion then formed of him. But of that later also.

In sharp contrast to the foregoing was the conduct of "Captain Bucher," of the 108th. He was about as mean as men are made. I had a little encounter (in words) with him myself on a certain occasion, from which he did not emerge with flying colors. However, his meanness did not manifest itself in the use of foul language. That, at least, was to his credit in so far as I knew.

Abuse of all military custom and authority was shown by requiring prisoners at Rock Island to work *outside of the prison*, felling trees, digging up stumps, and clearing out the underbrush without pay or other remuneration than one-eighth of a plug of navy tobacco, sold at eighty cents a plug by the sutler, and at first *nothing whatever was paid*. Details were taken from the different barracks of ten men from each, beginning with No. 1, the men alternating as for guard and picket duty in service. This had been going on before I arrived in the prison. In fact, I learned that it began almost with the arrival of the first lot of prisoners. I protested against this detailing of prisoners of war to do work for which they received no pay.

In March, 1864, one raw, cold morning, I and nine others from my barrack were detailed for outside work. I went with the detail as far as the guardhouse outside, where we were halted and axes, picks, and spades given us, and then we were ordered to move off around the corner of the prison wall. The others moved off, but I stood fast. The sergeant of the guard asked me rather brusquely: "Well, why ain't you moving?" I told him 'twas because I did not intend to. "And why not?" "Well, simply for this reason: we are prisoners of war, and you have no right to take us outside of the prison to do government work without pay." "So that's it, is it? Well, we'll call the lieu-

tenant and see what he says." The lieutenant came and the situation was explained, and there is where I first became acquainted with "Big Ben." He also wanted to know why. I repeated to him my reasons for refusing to work outside, and ended the argument with: "We are prisoners of war, and not convicts." He grew red in the face, and then after a moment's hesitation said, "Well, I'll have to report this to Colonel Johnson;" and after asking my name and barrack told the sergeant to turn me back inside. I returned to my barrack, and the orderly, "Uncle" Jim Ford, of Owenton, Ky., began catechising me, and I told him the story of my rebellion. His only comment was: "Well, of course you're right; we all know it and feel the same way; but what can we do?" I advanced the point that if we all stood together and refused they would not dare do it; but that if we didn't assert our rights they would make us do the labor for nothing and charge the government for full wages and put the money in their pockets. And to this day I have always believed that was done.

During that summer a lot of prisoners from Price's army were brought in, between seven hundred and eight hundred, among them some officers who were shortly after sent East, with the exception of two or three who disguised (?) themselves as privates in order to remain with some of their friends and companions in arms, one colonel whose name I cannot recall, and a Captain Roberts. They were made acquainted with the "work feature" in vogue. The colonel asked Colonel Johnson to pay him a visit. Soon Colonel Johnson came; and though I was not near enough to hear all that was said, I heard enough to understand. "Colonel, this must be stopped. I shall communicate what I have learned to my government." I learned from others that he further told Colonel Johnson that "if he could find volunteers to work at any wages he chose to pay them or no wages at all, well and good; but to force men to go outside of the prison to work for nothing or next to nothing [holding up a square of plug some one had given him for the occasion], this five cents' worth of tobacco—sir, I tell you it must stop." Colonel Johnson's back was turned to me, and I could not see



his face; but others told me he turned red in the face, and finally agreed to adopt the Confederate's plan and call for volunteers. This was done and wages paid (?). One ten-cent loaf of bread for a day's work found all the workers needed, besides hundreds more who would have been glad of the chance.

This went on until the spring of 1865. When the Confederacy was in the throes of death, the detailing again began. This time a whole barrack would be detailed at a time, leaving only the cooks, the orderly, and those too sick to walk. And it was on one of these occasions that Captain Bucher showed his brutal character, a fair exterior (he was a handsome fellow) hiding the brute. Bucher was superintending the getting out of a detail from Barrack 61 directly in the rear of 47; and after all but one were out in ranks, the doughty Captain saw one man remaining in the barrack sitting by the stove (the weather still being cool) with a blanket over his shoulders. He called out sharply: "Here, you in there, come out here and fall in!" The man, who had been under the doctor's care for some time and was just recovering from a siege of fever and still weak, arose slowly and, coming to the door, told the captain that he was unwell, just recovering from a "spell of sickness," and "not able to work." "Come out here, I tell you, or I'll pull you out!" The man came down the steps slowly, still protesting that he was unable to work. And I and all those who saw him knew that he was unfit. His own barrack mates spoke up for his exemption. This only seemed to aggravate the case. The Captain in a rage seized the poor fellow by the shoulder, whirled him around, pushed him forward, at the same time giving him a kick behind which, had it not been for falling against the man in front of him, would have thrown him forward on the ground.

This was more than I could quietly endure, and I sang out: "You d—d brute!" I knew the risk, but could not help it. There were perhaps a dozen of us standing at the kitchen door of 47, and we all had the same feelings—a desire to strangle the beast. He glared at us for a moment, and then gave the

order to "Forward! and step lively." That was the last time that I can remember having seen Bucher.

We cannot accuse any officer there of ever having "shot a prisoner," though there is little doubt that such brutes as Hogendoble, Graham, and Bucher need not have been begged to do so. That kind of work was delegated to the guards, and a few instances herein given will demonstrate their ability to do so. There were many men among our guards, both officers and privates, who were both honorable and humane—men who no doubt were shamed by the actions of their fellows, men who could not bring themselves to sanction any act of brutality practiced upon us.

My own experience is hardly worth mentioning. For rebelling against work I was triced up by the wrists to a tree on the main avenue with a clothesline, with my toes only resting on the ground, for four short hours of sixty long minutes each, under a gray, sunless sky, with a sharp March wind blowing across the frozen river and cutting through my scant clothing till my very marrow seemed frozen. But I must say for the old German corporal who triced me up that he did it as humanely as his orders permitted. He made me pull down the sleeves of my jacket (one given me by a barrack mate, William H. Gregory, of South Carolina) and tied the line over them in a manner to not too much bruise my wrists. I always think kindly of the old man for his kindness of action as well as his words: "I don'd like to do dis, put I haf my orters. Pull town your jacket shleeves, so I kin tie roundt dem, und den idt von'd pe so padt. I don'd vant to hurd you more as I ken helb id." He was a Dutchman, but he was far more humane than many of my own countrymen.

After four hours of torture, the old man came and, in his own vernacular, "tied me loose." My arms refused to drop, and he was obliged to reach up to unfasten the line from my wrists. The least attempt to bring my stiffened arms down was excruciating. My hands, arms, and body were blue and purple in spots and my finger tips white with the cold. The old man shook his head and ejaculated: "Dat vas too badt. Now go mid your parrack and git you varmedt oop, und got your arms roobedt down. Too badt." Thus with

my hands up in the air I walked to my barrack, where Uncle Jim Ford, Tom Herndon, Abbey, and others got my jacket off, and by vigorous rubbing and chafing of joints and muscles got my arms down; but warmth did not come. A chill seized me, and they got me into my bunk and piled about a dozen blankets on top of me. I was not yet warm when my old corporal came for me, took me out to the guardhouse, and invested me with a 32-pound ball and six feet of chain. I wore it a month in daytime. But I was never detailed again until May, 1865.

Wanton shooting of prisoners and the unspeakable treachery of guards form about as black a chapter of crime as any ever recorded, and it is one phase of our prison life not found in the government records of Rock Island. Much ado was made about Captain Wirz having shot a prisoner with his own pistol; and for that crime and others falsely imputed to him, as was afterwards shown, he was hung and his name and memory blackened by the very ones who had winked at the murder of prisoners in their own prisons.

It is not conceivable that the authorities at Washington did not know what was being done at the different prisons of the North. If Wirz was truly guilty, having himself shot a prisoner with or without cause, was he any more guilty of murder than was Col. A. J. Johnson, who never punished a single one of his men for having wantonly and without the least cause shot prisoners to death in broad daylight or in the night? I was a witness to four cases of the kind—three in daylight and one in the night—witness to the shooting, and not simply viewing the victims after death.

I defy any one to produce any authentic record of punishment meted out to any guard at Rock Island for having shot a prisoner or for having shot into the barracks during the night after "taps," at any and all hours, without the least cause or provocation, but with the sole intention to kill or maim. If any such record can be shown, I will make all due and honorable reparation within my power. And in what follows will be found evidence that no punishment was ever awarded for the crimes committed.

There was a "dead line" around the prison on the inside.

On the north and south sides parallel with the river a ditch about three feet wide by about one and a half deep was dug, and about forty feet from the fence and over this were built the "sinks" at the end of each cross street. This constituted the dead line, and every man knew that to cross that ditch day or night without permission was to invite a bullet, and I never knew of any one's attempting to force it, *except* as will appear hereafter. At the upper and lower ends of the inclosure the dead line was a mere drain not more than a foot wide and six inches deep, a board forming the bottom and one ripped in two forming the sides and not more than twenty-five feet from the fence.

In what I here relate I can give no dates, and in only five cases can I give the number of the barrack to which the parties belonged, and with only four individuals can I give the names of the parties shot. Nor can I give the cases in positive sequence, though each and every one is painted in undying colors on my memory. The first was the case of "Tom" Callahan, well known and popular, a personal friend of "Uncle" Jim Ford and "Tom" Herndon, of my barrack. Tom had money—gold. He wanted to be free, and, like many others, found it a key to unlock the bars if not the gates of his prison. He struck up a bargain with the sentry, a black negro of the 108th, whose beat was from the upper corner on the river side to about the lower end of Barrack No. 27. A \$20 gold piece was the price, which was passed in some way to the negro, who was to go on guard again at 10 P.M., and then Tom was to crawl to where one of the upright boards of the fence lacked about six inches of reaching the ground. This made it an easy start, and by very little work enough of the loose soil could be scraped away to enable a man to crawl through. At the appointed hour Callahan crawled to the spot indicated, opposite Barrack 13, and was industriously digging his way out (who can say with what hopes and visions?) when steps were heard overhead. The sentry was coming from the corner with even tread, slowly, steadily, without haste. Callahan hears, but heeds not, for his \$20 gold piece is in the negro's pocket. Industriously he digs; each scoop of earth removed brings him that much nearer liberty. One or two

friends in 13 who were in the secret were watching at the windows. The night was dark, but the sentry could be outlined plainly against the sky. He halts in his tramp directly above the unsuspecting man fifteen feet below. Soon the hole will be wide enough and deep enough, and then? There is a silent movement by the treacherous black above; then the gun comes from his shoulder, the muzzle is dropped over the guard rail, pointing straight down between the shoulders of the liberty-loving digger below. A flash and a report, awakening the sleeping tenants of the barracks with a start, and Callahan is free.

Uncle Jim was in the secret, awake and on the *qui vive*, and as I raised up on my bunk I heard him say: "Poor Tom! he's gone." Then I first learned who "Tom" was. After roll call in the morning, I went with him and others around to 13, and there we saw Callahan still lying on his face. Shortly after a lieutenant with men and a light wagon came in, and they took up the corpse, put it (not roughly) into the wagon, and drove out—Rock Island's first murder, but not the last.

A short time after this murder we were awakened just at daybreak by a shot at the upper end of the prison. Again I went as soon as I could get away. This time it was at Barrack No. 2. One of the men, name unknown, had opened the door, stepped to the second step as near as we could figure from his height, had closed the door behind him, faced around to descend to the ground just in time to catch the bullet of the murderous negro near the upper gate full in the breast. He fell without a groan to the ground, from which his comrades picked him up and carried him inside and laid him on the floor. While I was there the officer of the guard came and demanded to know the cause of the shot, addressing the sentry. "I shot a man there." "What did you shoot him for?" "'Case he was across de dead line." The officer turned and asked where the man was who was shot, and was shown the man lying on the floor. "Well, I'll send in the wagon for him," he said, and turned to go, when one of the men called to him, "Lieutenant, please look at this," pointing to the bullet hole in the door about three inches above the

knob and the mark of the bullet on the footboard of the middle bunk next to the door where it had been struck diagonally, the bullet glancing off. (It was only the board that saved the feet of one of the men sleeping on the bunk.) He says: "He was across the dead line, which is six feet from the foot of the four steps to the ground, and the bullet hole is above the knob of the door. If he had been only on the ground at the foot of the steps, the bullet that made that hole would have passed above his head by two feet. And he is shot through the breast."

The lieutenant looked around at us dumb, and then turned without a word and walked away—Murder No. 2. We waited for a while to see whether the sentry would be relieved; he was not until the regular relief went on guard. We heard that he had been put under arrest pending an investigation. Be that as it may, some of those same men in No. 2 reported, and the report was not denied, that twelve days later "that same negro came on the parapet with the relief guard with the chevrons of a corporal on his arms." I do not vouch for this. But that was the report.

Again, two young men of Barrack 55, on my row and next to the dead line, concluded a bargain with the two guards whose beats met opposite 55 to allow them to climb the fence. Again the inducement was a "double eagle." They constructed a short ladder in the barrack, and at the given hour of a dark night slipped across the dead line in the deep shadow, set their ladder against the fence, and began to climb. It lacked at least four feet of reaching the top, but with the *promised help* of the sentries they expected to get over. The two sentries were above and ready. When the first had about reached the top, two guns were pushed down, two flashes, two reports in quick succession, and the topmost man tumbled from the ladder, bored through from the shoulder down. The other at the bottom had just set his foot on the lower rung of the ladder and caught the bullet in the inner thigh, severing the main artery. He rushed back into the barrack, the blood spouting at every leap. They set him on a seat, and within ten minutes he too was free—free as the comrade who lay by the wall. Murders Nos. 3 and 4, and



by whom? Negroes? No! By white men, by men of their own race and blood, had Graham and Stephens been lured to their death. Can Andersonville, Salisbury, Libby, or any other Southern prison furnish a like record of base treachery? With all the crimes imputed to them, they have never yet been accused of such baseness.

This ended any attempts at bribery or scaling or burrowing out under the walls, except by tunnels from under the barracks next to the fence. The lamps attached to the fence, throwing their light inward, were reënforced by like lamps set up on boards driven into the ground at the dead line, midway of the lamps on the wall, throwing their light against the wall, thus lighting the dark spaces between the wall lamps. This frustrated any attempt to approach the wall even during the darkest night. One thing which must be plainly understood is that prisoners were allowed free access to the sinks day and night. One night Tom Jarrett, of 47, was obliged to go to the sink about eleven o'clock. It was a dark night. Promiscuous shooting had been indulged in during the nights following the attempt of Graham and Stephens to escape, Barrack 55 being a special target. Men feared to step outside of their quarters after dark, and with just cause. Jarrett was a simple-minded, good-natured fellow, liked by every one, and was afflicted with that peculiar disease of the sight known as "moon blindness," and at night he was as "blind as a bat." But he knew the way to the sink by feeling from one barrack to the other. He had just reached No. 55, and was feeling his way along the wall when the sentry on the parapet (a white man, too) called out: "Halt!" We had been more or less apprehensive, and were expecting trouble. We heard the challenge and then Tom's answer: "Don't shoot! I'm blind." Hardly had the words left his mouth when we heard a shot, followed by a cry of pain and then lamentations, and we heard him working his way slowly back. When Uncle Jim and Sep Abbey went out and brought the poor fellow in, he was in a most lamentable condition. When the sentry fired on him, Tom's hand was feeling the way against the face of No. 55, and the bullet, thanks to the darkness and bad aim, struck his arm, shattering the elbow. The surgeons saved his forearm

and hand, but cut out the whole elbow joint. That was No. 5, "attempt to murder."

One night we heard a shot on the south side. Next morning I went over to No. 28 and saw a man who had been shot in the arm while sleeping on his bunk, the top one on the north side against the kitchen partition. He was lying on his back with his right arm across his breast. The bullet was fired diagonally, passing through the end of the barrack and kitchen partition, entering his arm near or at the elbow, passing out between the bones of his wrist, and fortunately not breaking a bone. Four inches lower would have pierced his breast. No. 6, "attempt to murder."

During the summer of 1864 a large ditch for sanitary purposes was dug through the middle of the central street, and a large number of men were employed in it. The weather was fearfully hot and dry. A single pump furnished the only drinking water for the prison at that time, having over eight thousand inmates. Only one bucket was allowed to each man coming to the pump, where two men were detailed to pump from roll call in the morning until twelve o'clock and two others from twelve till six or later. During the hottest parts of the day there would be as many as a hundred buckets in line on each side of the pump, each man waiting his turn to fill his bucket, and often relieving the almost exhausted pumpers by pumping their own buckets full. Naturally with so many buckets considerable time must elapse before the turn of the man at the end of the line would come. It was virtually an endless chain of empty buckets. The workers in the ditch had their special water carrier; but with the long string of buckets ahead of him the carrier would be unusually delayed, and the men in the bottom of an eight-foot ditch, with the heat of the sun overhead and their exertions below with pick, shovel, and barrow, felt that it was a long time between drinks. One day especially they had become unusually thirsty, caused by an unusual delay in getting water to them by their carrier; and as soon as he appeared at the head of the ditch and called out "Water!" they all, twenty or more, rushed up the bank at the head of the ditch on the avenue and crowded around the carrier with his bucket-



ful of clear, cool water brought up from a thousand feet below the surface.

Right here an explanation is in order. Sometime previous a report became current that an attempt was to be made by the prisoners to make a break for liberty. Any such attempt must have resulted in a useless expenditure of blood and have proved abortive. But that is quite another story and has no place here. In consequence of those rumors, the guards had been enjoined to renewed vigilance and doubled on the parapets. Orders were issued in the prison prohibiting the assembling of prisoners on the avenue and streets in "groups" of more than "two." Sentries were instructed to disperse all "groups" thus assembled wherever or whenever it might occur by order to "disperse," and if not obeyed to fire on them without further warning. Thus matters stood on the day in question, and it was not the first time that day nor for days previous that the workmen to the number of two and more at a time came up out of the ditch to get a drink. They were at all times in full view of the sentries, and there was not a single apparent excuse for mistaking them.

The sentry at 55 saw them rush in a body out of the ditch and surround the carrier; but, knowing full well their object, did not feel that any order obliged him to call on them to disperse. It was the same with the sentry at the opposite end of the street, at 42 and 56; but he was built of different "dust." When the workmen swarmed around the carrier, he promptly called out: "Disperse that crowd!" No attention was paid to the order by the thirtys men. I was standing quite near No. 43 on the avenue and saw that the sentry intended to shoot, and called to the workmen: "Scatter, boys! that fellow is going to shoot." Whether they heard or not, I cannot tell; but others who were passing sought cover. Again the sentry called on them to disperse. One of the men called to the sentry: "We are workmen." There was no need to tell him that; he knew it as well as they, but the knowledge did not stay his hand. He raised his gun and pulled the trigger. Three went down. One, the first, shot through the liver, died in two hours; the second, in front of him, was bored through the intestines from behind, the ball making its exit near the

navel; and the third was caught near the waistband from the rear, the bullet perforating the body, cutting through the inner wall of his right pocket and dropping into that receptacle. Those two were taken to the hospital. One died a few days later and the third was still living, but of his ultimate fate I am ignorant. In order to follow events in the order of their occurrence, turn to page 32, since that event occurred during the summer of 1864, before the "Calf Pen" was laid off.

During the winter following at one time we ran short of coal. Any one acquainted with the winter temperature in that latitude (41-40) will not need to ask what that meant to men illy clad, insecurely housed, and with vitality reduced by meager fare, and in ill health as many were. We were reduced to all sorts of makeshifts to eke out our scanty supply of fuel—picking up the limbs of trees to burn (of which a few remained on the ground from trimming), and huddling around the cooking boiler in the kitchen, for which the coal was reserved, while the stoves in the living rooms were fed simply enough to keep them "alive" without in any degree warming the room. Fortunately the season was not yet advanced to midwinter frostiness, but there were several inches of snow on the ground.

In the summer of 1864 the "authorities" had opened a recruiting office, holding out the bribe of "full rations" to complaining stomachs, ostensibly on the grounds that there were many men among us who realized that they were engaged in a wrong cause and would gladly accept service with the loyal States under a guarantee that they should not be anywhere engaged against their former comrades, but be sent to the frontier to war against the Indians, and thus prove their loyalty (?) to the old flag.

But this phase will be treated elsewhere. It is not intended in this paper to enter into an argument upon the culpability of either the briber or the bribed.

A line fence had been set up between Barracks 44 and 46, 58 and 60, and 72 and 74 from the lower fence to the ditch in Center Street, thence along the ditch in front of Barracks 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, and 56, cutting off eighteen barracks for the receiving quarters of the new recruits. This was immediately

dubbed the "Calf Pen" and the main remaining part of the prison the "Bull Pen." As soon as recruits were acquired they were transferred to the "Calf Pen" and fed on full rations, "to fatten up for the slaughter." Some had gone simply because, as they put it, "I'm hungry all the time, and I can't stand this any longer; but I'll desert at the first chance." But I saw one poor devil of a dried-up specimen whose stomach would not be bribed by the promise of full rations. He came by our door one day, gaunt and hollow-eyed. On the *ash pile* in front of our door, in the dirty snow, lay the finely chopped pieces of marrow joint some one had thrown out; and stooping down, he picked up a handful of the pithy pieces and munched them as he went on his way slowly. The loaves of good white bread and the pounds of meat given out on the other side of the fence beyond the avenue could not tempt him to bring a blush to the cheeks of those who were awaiting his coming in far-away Georgia. And God knows that if there was but one hungry man inside that prison he was that one. But he was not the only one.

Some of the men who went into the "Calf Pen" gave evidence of a desire to help some comrade who would remain true to his cause, and communications were soon established and chunks of meat and bread would find their way over the fence without wings, though flying. Between 44 and 58 a bit of punk sap on the edge of a board permitted an enlargement of the crack between the boards, so that one could see with one eye the person on the other side with whom he was conversing. But this state of affairs and friendly intercourse, with the now and then chunks of bread and beef, could not continue. Headquarters soon dropped on to it, and a guard was put on the beat between the fence and the ditch and the rear sides of 44, 58, and 72, and a straight line from corner to corner across the street was constituted the "dead line," beyond which we were forbidden to pass.

Of the sentries who patrolled this beat (a space of less than nine feet from the barrack to the fence), I can remember but one distinctly. I do remember that some were good fellows, considerate, confining themselves to a strict discharge of their duty without any display of undue harshness. But the

one I do remember left the impress of his brutal features stamped ineffaceably on my memory—a squat-built negro as black as any ever painted by nature's brush, low forehead, deep-set eyes, and the elongated jaw of the gorilla, a face denoting at once the low grade of mentality characteristic of the lowest type of the negro—a mere brute.

On a day during our coal famine, above mentioned, a man came out of Barrack No. 30. I was on the avenue between 43 and 44, nearer 43, and saw this man walk through the snow to a tree standing near the edge of the ditch, from which two limbs the thickness of a man's wrist had been sawed off and were lying near its roots. Reaching the tree, he stooped and, taking the sawed-off ends one in each hand, started toward the kitchen door of No. 30; and when about five paces of the steps, this same negro, arriving at the end of his beat at the ditch, without warrant, authority, or cause, and in the most brutal manner possible, ordered the man to drop those limbs. I can hear him yet: "You d—d Rebel, drop dem lim's." Clearly within his known rights, the man paid not the least attention, and the nigger repeated: "Drop dem lim's, I say!" The man kept on, not heeding the order. When within a couple of paces of the steps, the nigger raised his rifle, took deliberate aim, and pulled the trigger. Shot through the spine, the poor fellow fell forward on his face in the snow motionless. And in another home in the Southland some one was waiting, waiting for the husband that never came, children waiting for the loving father who would never again give them the good night kiss. (Mark 10.)

As before stated, during the summer of 1864 we received a large addition to our numbers from the Trans-Mississippi Department as well as from the Army of the Tennessee. Price's men had been assigned to quarters almost entirely below the ditch, from 44 to 74. These and the accessions from the Army of the Tennessee swelled our numbers to over 8,000. The highest average was 8,607 (for the month of June), and the lowest for five months 8,181 (October). And as before stated, the inmates had the unrestricted privilege of use of the "sinks" night or day, which was an absolute necessity in view of the numerous cases of "summer complaint"

resulting from the use of the bad river water and the nature of our diet. At the time of the following occurrence I had myself been sick for some time, and one starlit night when the conditions of my mind and body would allow me no rest I went strolling. I knew I was taking a big risk, but in my then frame of mind I did not much care what happened. My supper had been of the very lightest, so that at the hour of midnight, when I found myself roaming the streets without any definite purpose, my mind and stomach were both in a chaotic state of unrest. In my wanderings I had crossed the street from the neighborhood of 59 and 61 toward 47, then turned my steps toward the avenue. On the opposite side of the avenue I saw a man coming toward me in the rear of Barracks 44 to 56 row. He was in his underclothes only, and in the starlight I could see him plainly. Behind him the lamp on the wall threw its light on his white garments, making him a shining mark. When near the avenue in the rear of 43, I stopped and stood looking at him as he came toward me. He was between Barracks 50 and 46, and evidently near his journey's end, and so it proved. A flash from the parapet behind him, a loud report in the still night, a whistling Minie, a dull thud, and he dropped forward and lay still and quiet with a murderer's bullet in his back. (Mark II.) The sentry must have seen this man go to the sink and leave it. He did not halt him on the way there; but allowed him to leave it, and then deliberately shot him through the back. Another home in the Southland where are heard the sobs of the widow and the wail of the orphan.

The winter of 1864-65 passed and spring came with her smiles, but it brought small comfort to us except in the thought that our term of imprisonment would soon end. We would have papers passed to us now and then which would tell of some great Union success. Richmond had at last fallen, Lee and Johnston had surrendered, Lincoln had been assassinated, and the unfortunate Wirz was in a dungeon. All these came in rapid succession. Then indeed were the dark days come. Worse than all else, the knowledge that we were crushed to the earth at last, all power of resistance gone, and uncertain of our own ultimate fate was our bitterest por-

tion. Above all did we dread the effect of Lincoln's assassination. A regiment of "one hundred day" men had been sent to guard us. It was the 192d Illinois, if I remember right, and they were worse than the niggers. Worse, because they were white men and boys, officered by veterans whose terms had expired. Of the officers I can say nothing, never having come in contact with any that I can remember. But of the men who mounted guard over us, they had among them a murderous lot. Their firing into the barracks during the night became a matter of such common occurrence that men in the outer rows next to the dead line feared to sleep on the upper and middle bunks, and slept on the floor in many instances for safety. I cannot recall having heard of any others having been killed or wounded by shooting into the barracks during the nights. If none were wounded, it is a wonder. I give only those cases I myself saw. Others doubtless witnessed as many other murders as I did. Mine is the experience of only one prisoner in that dreadful place.

One warm day in spring toward evening a crowd had gathered at the lower end of 44 as usual to hold confab with the inmates of the "Calf Pen" and in many instances exchange rough "compliments." I happened to be among the audience taking note of the "badinage;" and as it happened that day, the same scowling-visaged nigger who had killed the man at No. 30 was on guard. The boys would crowd the line, some even going beyond it when the sentry's back was turned, but scooting back as soon as he was on the point of turning. Right here I wish to repeat what I then told those fellows: that if he had turned suddenly and fired into them he would have been perfectly justified. They were treading forbidden ground, and knew that they were making themselves liable. As he had more than once ordered them back from the line, naturally he became impatient. So would I or any other in the same circumstances.

About twelve feet from the line stood a tree leaning slightly toward the avenue and almost opposite the steps of 44. Against this tree was leaning a young man of Price's army with his arms crossed on his breast, a silent onlooker, taking no part whatever in what was going on; nor had he moved from the



time he had planted himself against the tree, altogether in the rear of the crowd. Hence any order to "move back" did not affect him in the least. Nor was he in any way subject to the order, no more than if he had been sitting quietly on the steps of the barrack.

I noticed that the sentry was shortening his walk and told the boys to keep away from the line. I was intent on watching him now to the exclusion of all else; and when he came back toward the ditch a last time I moved back into the avenue at the end of 44 as he passed that end and said to the crowd: "For God's sake, boys, move back from the line. You know that he shot one man without any cause at all, and I tell you he is going to shoot if you don't keep away." And with that I moved still farther back. The nigger moved along slowly; and, as I was told, wheeled suddenly before arriving at the end of his beat, threw his gun up, and called (that I heard), "Git back dar, d—n you!" and started back. The crowd scattered, some passing me on the run. Arriving at the corner and seeing only the crowd on the avenue scattered, he paid no attention to any of them; but directed his whole attention to the young Missourian, who had not moved in all the while and was still leaning against the tree, with his arms crossed on his breast and with the faintest suspicion of a smile on his face, as of one slightly amused by the antics of a lot of children at play. The very calmness of his attitude and appearance was too much for the nigger. I saw him raise his gun and pull the trigger and saw the bark of the tree rise with the concussion of the shock of the impact of the murderer's bullet. The poor fellow fell in a heap at the foot of the tree—dead, bored through the throat. (Mark 12.) Another home in which some one would vainly await the coming of a son, a brother, and mayhap a sweetheart.

I submit it to the judgment of the most partial critics that had the sentry fired at any other of the men who had been "crowding" the dead line he would at least have had some show of justification; but he could not by any possible means have failed to see this man and that he had never moved from the time he had taken his stand against the tree, had never approached the dead line, nor taken any part beyond being a

mere spectator. It was nothing more, nothing less than a cold-blooded murder, as were those which preceded it.

But it was the "last straw." An indignation meeting was held, and the presence of the commanding officer on the ground shortly after the occurrence was fraught with results. I cannot state positively whether he was sent for or whether he came in to inform himself of the affair of his own volition. I only know that I saw Lieutenant Colonel Carraher, who was in command that day, at 44 on the avenue surrounded by a score or more of excited but none the less quietly determined men. I hastily drew near and heard some words which showed the temper of the men who were addressing the Colonel. He listened with a grave face. Said the spokesman: "Colonel, we have come to the limit of endurance. We are being shot like dogs at all hours of day and night, when we walk on the streets and when we are asleep in our bunks. And now here is another man murdered in broad daylight without the least show of an excuse. This nigger has killed two men without a shadow of reason, and now listen: this nigger must go out of this prison, *and stay out*. If ever he comes back into this prison, *we'll hang him*, understand that. And you have not got men enough outside to prevent it. If it comes to the point of being murdered like dogs, then you'll have to kill us all."

Colonel Carraher looked around and said: "Well, men, you are right. I'll see that this man is taken out, and I promise you that he will not come in here again."

More followed on the same subject which I do not recall. At all events, the nigger was immediately relieved, and I never saw him again; also I noticed and recall that there was much less shooting after that. In *truth*, I cannot recall another case of wanton shooting afterwards. But was it not about time that it ceased? *Nine men killed outright* and three wounded, one of whom, I was informed, died of his wound in the hospital. Can Andersonville, with its 52,000 and odd hundred inmates, show a like proportionate number of men foully murdered? Can any other Southern prison show a like list of wanton murders? If so, no records have ever revealed the fact. No article ever published in the most



rabid, radical journal of the North during the war or after showed such figures. Nor does any record by any prisoner held in the South record any *such* murdering of prisoners as has been shown in these pages. Not even at the trial of Captain Wirz could such accusations be brought against him, and he had 52,345 prisoners to guard; while we were at the most 12,883, which is 568 more than the figures I was furnished with from the prison books June 15, 1865, while yet there.

Supposing the charge made against Captain Wirz was true, in that he had killed a prisoner himself, was he in any way whatever more guilty of murder than was Col. A. J. Johnston for allowing his men to shoot prisoners as were those in the cases I have cited? It will be difficult to show that he was less of a murderer. His published answer to his critics and accusers dated November 23, 1864, in view of succeeding events wherein I have shown three men foully slain and one wounded as well as the killings which had preceded these and the countless shootings into the barracks in the night, when for fear of being shot while asleep in their bunks men slept on the floor, stands a perpetual accusation against him. If he could not have his way, a most inhuman way, by his own words, he *permitted* his men to murder prisoners under his charge.

It will not do to endeavor to exonerate Colonel Johnson on the ground that he was ignorant of the actions of the troops under his command. That would put upon him the brand of utter incompetency and his utter unfitness for the command of even a very limited number of men in any capacity whatever. And we well know that from a military point of view he was as capable as the majority of officers of like rank. To what, then, are we to ascribe his utter indifference to the acts of his men as herein stated? There is but one answer; and the key to that answer, revealing the whole character of the man, is to be found in his letter of November 23, 1864, to which reference has hereinfore been made, and of which we heard at the time and which subsequent events fully confirmed.

“ . . . In the first place instead of placing them in fine,

comfortable barracks, with three large stoves in each and as much coal as they can burn both day and night, *I would place them in a pen with no shelter but the heavens*, as our poor men were at Andersonville. Instead of giving them the same quality and *nearly the same quantity of provisions that the troops on duty receive*, I would give them as near as possible the same quantity and quality of provisions that the fiendish Rebels give our men; and instead of a constant issue of clothing to them, I would let them wear their rags, as our poor men in the hands of the Rebel authorities are obliged to do." . . .

Italics in the phrase, "nearly the same quantity," are mine.

Colonel Johnson referred to the period ending June 10, 1864, to which it truthfully applied; but his language was intended to convey the impression that we were served with "quantity" continuously and were being served with this same "quantity" at the time he wrote that letter. In so doing he was guilty of uttering a deliberate falsehood, be he living or dead. It stands a deliberate falsehood, and none knew it better than he. But it is only in keeping with the principles and sentiments set forth in that letter. Had he had his way, he would have starved us to death, not even allowing us fuel with which to cook the meager food given us, and his humanity (?) would have led him to put us in an "open pen" in a latitude where the mercury drops to forty degrees below zero in winter and reaches one hundred degrees and over in mid-summer. Verily, I would not be here to-day inscribing these bitter, cruel truths which for forty-four years I have kept locked away that none but the most intimate friends might see, and no one has ever yet seen the whole.

It is unseemly that, standing as we are, with one foot on the edge of the grave which is soon to be our last resting place, circumstances should force us in sheer self-defense to dig down through the putrid mold of forty years and bring forth in the sunlight the grinning skull and clanking, loathsome bones of a sad and lamentable past. It has been a painful task, one which I had hoped I would never be called upon to undertake; for should it come to the light, there are those of my own blood and kindly friends who wore the

blue, North and South, East and West, who must feel the stings conveyed by these pages—noble men who did their duty as they saw it, honorably and in the most humane and Christianlike spirit, among the guards who surrounded us and among those who conducted us to our prison; men for whom in all these years I have had but the most kindly feelings and whom I would be glad to meet at any time or at any place. "Let us have peace." Aye! but a "peace at any price" is the peace purchased by poltroons.

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Supplemental to the foregoing by Comrade Minnich it is deemed well by those who have the printing in charge to reproduce the story of Mrs. Kate E. Perry-Mosher from the *CONFEDERATE VETERAN* (pages 27-33) for January, 1906. This is additional to what was promised in the procurement of funds from friends for the publication.



MRS. KATE E. PERRY-MOSHER.

## HISTORY OF ROCK ISLAND, ILL., 1863.

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[Paper read by Mrs. Kate E. Perry-Mosher, Honorary President of the Henrietta Hunt Morgan Chapter, U. D. C., ~~Newport~~, Ky. She resides at ~~217 East 17th Street~~, Covington, Ky.] *1556 Madison Ave., Covington Ky*

I had gone to Rock Island in 1863 on a pleasure trip, and spent the summer with relatives there, never dreaming that a thing so momentous was to transpire as that the United States government would use the island for a military prison. The United States gained its right to this island through the Harrison Treaty with the chiefs of the Sac and Fox tribes of Indians, made at St. Louis in November, 1804. This had been their garden spot and the resort of the tribes during the summer months, because they found there an abundance of wild fruit, strawberries, blackberries, plums, etc., and they imagined it was cared for by a good spirit, who lived in a cave just under where Fort Armstrong was afterwards built. He was white, with large wings like a swan's, only ten times larger. I've often heard this legend and seen the cave. The Indians were loath to part with the island, since, too, the river supplied them with such fine fish, the island itself being the largest and most beautiful throughout the length of the great Mississippi River, which is quite two thousand miles.

Rock Island derives its name from the fact of its resting upon a bed of rock, consisting of limestone in horizontal strata well adapted for building purposes. It lies in the Mississippi River, between the cities of Moline and Rock Island, Ill. It is about three miles long, its greatest breadth being one mile. It is bounded for the most part by precipitous cliffs, being exceptional in the respect that most of its rock-ribbed boundary is above flood mark by from fourteen to twenty feet. At this point the river and the island run east and west. The eastern, or what appears to be the upper, part of the

island lies near Moline; the western, or foot of the island, is just at the city of Rock Island on the Illinois shore and opposite Davenport on the Iowa side. The boundary line separating Illinois from Iowa midriver places the island in Illinois.

The island seems to have had no history until the breaking out of the war with Great Britain, in 1812. The first incident of that war which concerned it was the attack upon Governor Clark's expedition to Prairie Du Chien by the Indians, which they nearly destroyed. Then the government established a fort there to protect the settlers, control the Sac and Fox tribes, and guard the travel upon the river.

In 1817 Fort Armstrong was built, and two companies of infantry stationed there regularly. In 1831 a most stirring chapter was added to its history, as the valiant garrison successfully defended the post and settlers during the "Black Hawk War." Lieut. Col. Zachary Taylor (afterwards President of the United States), Lieut. Jefferson Davis, and Abraham Lincoln took part in these furious encounters. In 1837 Lieut. Robert E. Lee surveyed the river channel here in the interest of the Mississippi River improvement, for he it is known that here is the foot of the rapids, which extend up and beyond some fourteen to eighteen miles.

Pause one moment, note this group of men: Jefferson Davis, Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee. Their lives even then seemed to run in near parallels; later, each stepped grandly forth, doing manfully and nobly the work life had for their hands, leaving, when death came, names emblazoned in glory upon the escutcheon of their country, and a love in the hearts of its people that will *never* die.

In 1856, when Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, he warmly advocated the location of a mid-continent arsenal upon the island, his earlier experience of twenty-two years before convincing him of its unequaled importance for ordnance purposes. Being so far inland, he considered it safe from attack by enemies by either lake or river. While he held the war portfolio, he used his influence and the authority of his position to prevent the government from selling the island to settlers who were anxious to locate there. It seemed

the very irony of fate that in the near future this very spot which he had so clung to and warmly defended for the government should have been chosen for a military prison, where brave men who devoutly believed in the cause they and he espoused should be placed, many to suffer and die.

In 1863 the island was covered with a dense timber growth, much of which was an undergrowth of what is known as "black-jack," a species of oak; but most of the trees were of the forest primeval. It was in the summer and fall of that year, 1863, that the United States government decided to build barracks here for a military prison. For this purpose it was most admirably situated, being far removed from the scenes of war, comparatively isolated, and considered very secure. Extensive barracks were built, and it became one of the largest military prisons of the North. The quarters for the prisoners were built on the north side—*i. e.*, facing the Mississippi River upon a sheer precipice whose foot reached the murmuring water as it flowed beneath—and about one mile from the lower or western end of the island. The prison covered about twelve acres. While it was considered the safest location, it exposed the buildings to the merciless blasts of the icy, cutting winds, which swept up and down the great, broad river.

A company of friends and I went all through the inclosure just as the barracks were finished. They were built of green lumber, which would shrink in the process of seasoning, leaving great gaps or cracks for the play of the freezing, piercing, searching wind and snow. To give an idea of the severity of the winters, I will state that I have been driven with a large party, in a band wagon sleigh drawn by four horses, across the Mississippi River at Rock Island, it being three-quarters of a mile wide, the ice covering it many inches thick. To emphasize still more: Sometime in the sixties the pier near the Iowa shore of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railway bridge was pushed bodily by the heavy ice down the stream some twenty-five feet. Again, during a severe windstorm the draw of the bridge (it is immense) was lifted from its masonry and blown over on its side upstream, so it hung suspended by the draw pier,



with both ends free in midair. Think of this, and then formulate some idea of how inhospitable this climate would prove to men thinly clad and just from the Southland of sunshine and roses.

As I have said, it was intended to be a large prison, which indeed it proved to be, as over twelve thousand men were confined there. This was not a fluctuating population, but a settled one, that remained. They were *prisoners!* What a condition! The prison itself took the form of a rectangle. There were fourteen east and west rows of one-story frame buildings, six in a row. Each barrack was one hundred feet long by twenty wide, with windows and three-tier bunks in the sides and a door in each end. Each barrack, when not crowded, would accommodate one hundred and twenty men. Of course they were constructed of rough boards, without paint outside or plaster within. There were fourteen rows of buildings, seven rows on the north and seven rows on the south. An avenue, at least seventy-five feet wide, ran through, dividing them. Then about fifty feet from the ends and sides of the buildings was the stockade. This was built of heavy timbers placed upon end and duly secured. On the outside of the stockade ran the parapet wide enough for the guards, who were constantly on duty, to pass and repass, there being also sentinel boxes every one hundred feet.

On the inside the stockade was paralleled by the *dead line*. This was really a ditch, which was equidistant, or about twenty-five feet each way, from barracks and stockade, over which should an unfortunate soul try to pass he was *shot—killed* if the miserable aim of the ever-vigilant guard on the parapet above proved true or his shot did not run wild. God knows his will was good, as murder was in his heart. These guards were volunteers from the 43d Iowa "Graybeards," called "Graybeards" because they were middle-aged with gray hair and beards; also the 4th Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps and the 108th Colored Volunteer Infantry from Kentucky. They had never been under fire, knew nothing of the baptism of blood, yet considered it a sacred duty to serve their country by deliberately killing one of their

defenseless foes upon the least provocation or none at all. Many poor prisoners were thus shot to death.

I was never on the parapet at Rock Island after the prisoners came; but was on that at Camp Chase, near Columbus, Ohio, whither my brother, as a prisoner of war, was transferred from Alton, Ill., that being a condemned prison—*i. e.*, spies who were condemned to death were put there. It was considered good enough for Forrest's men; but my father never rested until he effected a change and had my brother removed to Camp Chase, so afraid was he that a mistake (?) might be made, it being a very easy matter to order my brother out to be shot, especially since he had incurred their intense displeasure by compelling a faithful friend (who was held as a spy) to take his place on the exchange, my brother keeping out of sight until the said exchange had passed Fortress Monroe.

The island of Rock Island is separated from the mainland by an arm of the river running around it up to Moline. This body of water was known as the "Slough" in those days. In summer, when the river was low, the Slough would be at such times some two or three hundred feet wide and not very deep. What impediment was that to a prisoner who had escaped when possible liberty lay beyond? Across the foot, or west end, of the island runs the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific railroad. The Chicago trains come into the Rock Island yards, cross the Slough on a bridge, then the great bridge to Davenport, and thence on west.

It was on a dark, raw, gloomy day, December 3, 1863, when the *first* Confederate prisoners came. I promise you, it was a day fraught with intense excitement, never to be forgotten. The whole city was on the *qui vive*, with Davenport to help. Real, live Rebels were coming! and, ridiculous as it may seem, it is a fact that many were frightened, actually afraid of a disarmed foe. Still, they had curiosity to see how he looked, blankly disappointed, no doubt, to find him minus the horns and cloven hoofs. Some, let us hope, had hearts filled with a Godlike pity and a compassion divine for these brave heroes that the fortune of war had sent into their midst. It was known that the "prisoners' train" was to be run on

the island to a certain point, switched off, and they disembarked and marched to the prison, a mile away. Hundreds of Rock Island and Davenport citizens stood waiting at the designated place. A strong, thick cable of rope was run to keep the people back. The police of both cities were out in full force, with deputies sworn in.

The shrill whistle of the incoming train at last sounded, and the excitement began. As for myself, I was quivering with contending emotions—grief, which I was too proud to show, and a deep and tender pity for these *my people* from the far-away Southland, who had battled for the cause they believed to be true. Here they stood, hopeless, forlorn, and seemingly forsaken! My heart was nearly bursting; the blood was racing and leaping through my veins; my very brain was whirling. My soul reached out in agony and despair, wild with desperation over the fate of war. As they marched past, I was beside myself with suppressed pity—*fury*, if you will—and excitement! Had I been killed, I would have spoken. Waving my kerchief, I steadied my voice and said: "I am from Kentucky, and a friend." "*No talking to the prisoners!*" ordered the police. O, you should have seen the eager faces of the Confederates! How they lighted up to know that even *one* confessed friend was so near, and she a countrywoman! It seemed to thrill them. The word was passed up and down the line like wildfire. "There she is! there she is!" and every hat was raised as they passed. All this was but making matters worse for me, already nearly beside myself. I was simply *wild*, and yet tried hard to be seemingly composed. "Any of the 9th Tennessee, Forrest's command, here? My brother's regiment?" "*Yes, yes; lots of them,*" with eager looks beyond expression. "*No talking to the prisoners!*" thundered a policeman.

A few days after the doorbell rang. The maid came to me and said a soldier wished to see me. Going to the reception room, I saw a United States sergeant. He saluted, and handed me a letter. Imagine my surprise to find that it was from one of my brother's men! I at once saw a way for an "underground," and, believe me, I improved it. I talked to this sergeant until he promised me most faithfully that he'd

aid me all he could in carrying both notes and tobacco to the prisoners. May the eternal God have loved and blessed him for all he did! He proved as true as steel. Although arrested several times after returning to the island from the city, each time, he told me, he had torn the notes into snips. His guard, believing him innocent, did not watch him closely, and before reaching headquarters, a mile away, he had thrown the pieces to the winds. The tobacco he kept, as there could be no proof it was not his own. Fortunately I always gave verbal instructions about that. So when he went into the prison (he had charge of a barrack), he'd take the tobacco in and give it as per my wish.

The day I saw the prisoners (the first who came) I then and there determined to do all I could for them; but before going to work I resolved to see what authority I could have.

So I wrote at once to Mr. Stanton, President Lincoln's Secretary of War, to ascertain what privileges I would be granted in sending food and clothing. I took particular pains to let it be known at headquarters that I had done this and that I had received instructions. All of my reserved forte came to my aid. I was young, strong, healthy to a degree, and one of the most devoted, enthusiastic Rebels that ever claimed glorious "Old Kentucky" as her birthplace and home.

I began my work by writing to *all* my friends in Kentucky and everywhere else, asking for speedy aid. I wanted clothing and tobacco, the soldier's solace, but clothing especially. Then I begged all these friends to ask their friends, in this way establishing a sort of endless chain. Soon box after box of clothing and boxes of edibles began coming in. The latter, however, were generally sent for special friends. This contribution of clothing, shoes, tobacco, etc., continued to come in for months. I turned my cousin's aviary into a perfect "country store."

The prisoners knew what I was doing, and were constantly writing through headquarters for aid. I have now hundreds of such letters, bearing silent testimony to this fact, which I've kept as sacred through all these years. I would take each letter, make a list of the writer's wants, get the required articles together, putting same into a secure package,

then on a slip of paper write the prisoner's name and number of barrack, then beneath itemize the contents of said package, sign my own name as the sender (this was *required*), and secure this paper upon the bundle. Of course these were all searched at headquarters, that no contraband should go in. Upon certain days I'd send large consignments. One day it happened that I sent a very large lot. By this time, I must say, I was known, not only as a sympathizer, but an out-and-out Rebel, which fact was, of course, beyond concealment. When my expressman drove up and they took the packages out, there were so many; and, seeing my name upon them so repeatedly, the officer in charge lost all patience and yelled out: "Miss Kate E. Perry! Miss Kate E. Perry! I wish she'd never been born!"

As to the underground routes, besides the faithful sergeant already spoken of, one of the United States surgeons was kind enough to carry many notes. His family and my relatives were old and close friends, so he was soon *sounded* and *used*. Then the humble driver of a milk wagon was another whose heart was kind. He did splendid service, too. I also had various others, but must not forget to add to the list a very important aid—a Roman Catholic priest. He often visited the prison, as many children of his Church were there. He was permitted to go within the stockade, and had an especial barrack given him for confessional. After shriving members of his own Church, he'd send for one of the men to whom my notes were addressed. He told me the man would come with wild and anxious countenance and bulging eyes, he being a Protestant, wondering what a Catholic priest wanted with him. He soon found out, took all notes to deliver, having sworn to keep faithfully his own counsel after.

Time wore on, the dreadful winter finally passed, the poor prisoners in the meanwhile having suffered terribly. The severe climate, the insufficient clothing, food, and bedding, and the condition of their barracks all told most seriously against them. Many wrote me by the underground that upon unusually cold nights they divided up and slept by relief, comrades taking turns sitting up to keep the fires going in the stoves the best they could (this by stealth after lights

out) to keep from freezing. Portions of their bunks were often used to aid in this. Nevertheless, many poor souls did freeze.

The blessed spring, though late and shy in that climate, came at last, bringing softer, balmier air, and thus physical relief. In the meanwhile many had sickened and died, the number of Confederate graves fast growing. Smallpox added its horrors and swept many away. As the summer advanced the prisoners became restless. Plans of escape were made—some successful, while many failed. The prisoners were required to do all kinds of menial work—cleaning officers' quarters, scavenger, breaking rock, cutting undergrowth for a new road, digging and grading the same—the guard, of course, standing over them. But they were glad indeed to get "outside" at any price, for obvious reasons. Many never returned.

A lady from Missouri (a Mrs. Lynch), whose husband was a prisoner on the island, had written us that she was anxious to visit him. She came at last, but was not permitted to see her husband. She was grievously disappointed and almost heartbroken. Then it was concluded that it was a propitious time for my underground to be called into requisition. Through it we arranged all the details of a very daring scheme. Mr. Lynch was to try to escape. On a certain day he was to take the place of one of the prisoners sent out to work the road. We knew he could get some clothing in the stockade, and by a trusted hand we sent a pair of goggles. All things arranged and the day understood, we baked an old-fashioned jelly cake, and in the very center, wrapped in oil silk, was a pass, passes being required on the bridge over the Slough between the island and the city. Guards were posted to examine them.

The cake and a few other edibles were, with some trifles, put into a small basket, which the wife took over the afternoon before the date set for the culmination of our plot, and begged to see her husband. Again she was refused. Then she asked, with streaming eyes (for by this time she was both nervous and frightened, knowing what the morrow promised), that the little basket, with its innocent-looking contents,



might be sent to her husband. The officer of the day, after having it fully examined, called an orderly and sent it in. She returned greatly elated and excited. We became somewhat nervous. The scheme had carried well so far. The plot had begun, we knew it was at work, and that his fate and ours would be decided within the next twenty-four hours. He was to go on the detail for outside work the very next morning. It was then he was to get away, if he could, we to be ready to give him instant help in getting off and away.

The night passed, fair morning beamed. We watched and waited. The hours dragged; the long suspense seemed almost insupportable. Our nerves were strung to such a high tension that the minutes seemed hours. The time seemed full of evil portent. Fearing something had miscarried, we were almost at our wits' end, when suddenly the doorbell rang with a loud and shrill peal. We cautiously looked, and behold, our prisoner was at the door! His wife rushed into his outstretched arms, wild with weeping, and nearly swooned. In the rush and hurry of preparation to get off, he quickly told us how he watched his chance, friends in the plot helping. He stepped behind an embankment, tore off his working clothes (he had on a suit under them), put on the blue goggles, and came slowly walking around the other way, and stopped to look at the prisoners' work. His friends dared not look at him; but he actually addressed them some passing remark. Up rushed the guard and ordered him to "Move on! No talking to the prisoners!" He did move on, but not before he heard one of his friends say, *sotto voce*: "Free, by God."

All this was a tremendous risk, but he had weighed his chances. It was "liberty or death." He nerved himself to pass through the ordeal. He got to the Slough bridge, drew out his pass; and was sent ahead. We got him ready and speedily sent him off to a certain point to take an outgoing train. He left on the double-quick, and got safely away.

Mr. L. was scarcely out of sight before I rushed to the coachman and ordered him to bring the carriage to the door as quickly as he could put the horses to it. I then ran to my cousin and asked her to be ready, for her life, as soon as

she could, telling her about the carriage and that we must call at once upon Mrs. Johnson (we exchanged visits), whose husband, Col. A. J. Johnson, commanded the post. We got off on time, were driven very fast, and serenely made our call. We also went and made a call upon Mrs. Layton, whose husband was in charge of the correspondence of prisoners. It seems that we thus established an "alibi," for in the hubbub caused by the escape we heard that Colonel Johnson said during the commotion when discussing the affair: "Miss Perry is *certainly* innocent of this, for at that very time she was calling at my house." If the thought was any comfort to him, he was welcome to it.

One day I was hastily called to the front gate, and found there a young surgeon of the staff whom I had met socially and knew very well. I insisted upon his dismounting (he was gorgeous in high riding boots and equipments generally), but he declined, saying he was in a most fearful hurry. He had promised to deliver a letter to me. This he said he would do *provided* I'd give him my sacred word that I'd burn it the moment I had finished reading it. He told me that the writer had not long since been ill, was sent to the hospital, and was in his ward; that he liked him much, formed quite a friendship for him, and felt sorry for him. He said he (the surgeon) knew the contents of said letter, and consequently knew the great risk he was taking. I gave the desired pledge, he handed me the letter, and was evidently much frightened at his own act. Putting spurs to his horse, he tore up the avenue like mad.

The letter was from a prisoner who intended trying to escape and wanted me to know, so that I might be ready. That letter was genuine. I knew the writing well. I could not say so much of one that came soon after. A few days later, when I happened to be out (and I always did think they saw me go), two strange soldiers came, bringing a letter addressed to "Faithful." Be it known that that was my underground *nom de plume*. My cousin was foolish enough to receive the letter for me. That was, of course, an admission. If I were to be betrayed, they had gained their object.

When I returned from down town, I was overwhelmed to

find what my cousin had done. I knew instantly that either some underground mail had been captured or that treachery was abroad from some quarter. The authorities had evidently found something, and the question arose among them: "Who is 'Faithful?'" They determined to discover. Either it was some member of Mrs. Charles Buford's family (they were Kentuckians and all Rebels, Mrs. Buford being Gen. Basil Duke's own aunt) or it was that thorn in their side, Miss Kate E. Perry. So my cousin's having received the note for me placed it at once.

This letter, though bearing the same information as the first, was written in a strange hand. The excuse was that Mr. Burton, who wrote the one the frightened surgeon gave me, was ill, and one of the party who were to escape with him had been requested to write this for him. The writer went on to say that their plans were all laid and were *sure* to carry, and that my cousin, members of Mrs. Buford's family, and myself must not fail to be at the depot on a certain night; that Mr. Burton, from Shelbyville, Ky. (I had never seen him—he was a prison friend), would have a white string around his hat; that I would thus instantly know him, and should approach him without fear, with the money for the hoped-for journey. When I finished reading that letter, I *laughed* and wondered if the writer considered me an absolute fool. The more I thought it over, the more indignant and troubled I became, feeling sure it was a trap. Who had betrayed me? I was certain that the orderly who had been faithful so long had not. I was also sure of the Catholic priest and of the old doctor, who was a family friend. Either I had been deliberately betrayed by the young surgeon who gave me the letter at the gate or they had captured important mail in some inexperienced hand. Immediately I wrote to friends on the inside, telling them of the disaster and charging them never to address "Faithful" again, but instead "Pauline;" that she would be just as true.

The day came for the "coup" at the depot. We paid no attention to it—not foolish enough to fall into that trap. We remained safely at home. We afterwards heard through a

military friend that it was a deep-laid plot to catch all the sympathizers at once, red-handed.

A note was left at the door one day by two escaped prisoners from Camp Douglas, near Chicago. I knew the men—old friends and neighbors. One was J. Carroll Hamilton, of Sparta, Ky., brother of Mrs. J. P. Garvey, now of California. Some six or eight men had tunneled out from Camp Douglas, among them being Mr. Marion Birch, of Woodford County, Ky., Mr. Osborne, of Virginia, John Story, and J. Carroll Hamilton. I don't remember the names of the others. Upon their escape they separated, the two latter coming to me. I kept on hand what I termed an emergency fund. This served me well now. I sent them flying as soon as possible. The amount was returned to me by their friends, so that I might be prepared if called upon.

During all this time I was not idle with prison and hospital work. That went steadily on. It was a life of continual excitement, but my very heart and soul were in it. Though but a girl, I was doing all I could.

One morning a trim-looking soldier came. He called for me. For some reason (I never could tell why), instantly when I saw him I was "on guard." The man, I thought, was acting a part. So I watched every word I said. He was bright, gentlemanly, and talked and talked. I became unsuspicious. He was a spy. He simply labored to wring a single admission that I had seen or helped escaped prisoners. Then he'd change his tactics and go on the pathetic—pity them. So would I. I sang and played for him, softened him with music; then appealed to his better nature, recalling his home, his mother, his love for her. This seemed to be a sacred and tender thing with him. I watched for my life every word I said. I knew Fort Lafayette was my destination; threats had been made; but apparently I was unconcerned. It was a fearful game of "diamond cut diamond." I thought he'd never leave. After hours of fruitless trial, he got up and said: "Miss Perry, I will throw myself upon your mercy and acknowledge that I was *sent* here." "Indeed!" I exclaimed (I knew it all the time). "Yes," he continued, "but I would suffer my right arm to be cut off before I

would utter one word to injure you." "Thank you," I replied. "Now, will you do *me* one favor?" "Indeed, I will." "Well, it is *this*: Please tell Colonel Johnson for me that he knows I am a Rebel and that I say he is expected to keep the prisoners *in* the prison; but if one of them escapes and comes to me for help, I will surely give it, and he may help it if he can." I did do this, for I was angry, indignant to be so dealt with. The "spy" shook my hand most cordially and left. I used my underground and told some of my friends. They swore vengeance if they ever got hold of him.

Late one evening the bell was timidly rung. A young boy came—an escaped prisoner! We got him in. We had means of verifying our friends, and it was just here that the underground had served so well. He proved to be George Kern, of Bourbon County, Ky. He was fifteen years old, he said, and was small in stature and slender. We took him to a room upstairs and locked him in. As soon as possible we smuggled him food. We trusted no one. Servants especially might repeat. When he saw the food, he burst into tears. Young and nearly starved, he had wandered in the "black-jack," which had proved the prisoners' friend. Low, bushy, thick, it concealed them. Through its friendly shelter this young boy had hidden one night and that day.

If I remember correctly, it was Saturday night when he came. Here was a dilemma. We must keep him until Monday, and he must then get away. Imagine our situation. An escaped prisoner in the house. We knew we were being watched. Often we saw squads of soldiers with gleaming guns marching past up the avenue. This was a menace. George told us the surgeon of the post had helped him to escape. We were astounded, as we knew him to be exceedingly bitter in his feelings toward the South and almost cruel to the prisoners. How the help was given was easily explained. Dr. Watson had driven his buggy within the stockade one night. George Kern happened to be near, when it came like a flash: "Here is my chance." He darted under the buggy, caught the coupling pole (I think he called it), threw his feet around it, also clasping it with his hands and arms. When the doughty doctor drove out, behold, he car-

ried an escaping prisoner! Even in our fright we enjoyed the situation, and were immensely amused.

We held a council of war as to ways and means. I had my emergency fund, and we concluded that, as he was small and slender, we would dress him as a girl. This we did down to every detail. Hoops were worn; he had them. His bold, eaglelike eyes troubled us. So we trimmed up one of the scoop bonnets worn at that time, and with many adjurations made him promise to keep his eyes cast down. I prepared a pretty little hand basket and placed within it a box of face powder, comb, brush, and all such adjuncts to the toilet, together with extra collars, cuffs, and handkerchiefs. He was to personate a shy country girl. Poor boy! how sad he was when he bade us farewell!

I had lectured him most severely as to how he must act—his manner, etc.—as he was now a girl, and taught him how to manage his hoops, etc. Of course we were most anxious concerning his getting away safely; but this was such a huge joke that I was fairly dancing with delight. As he left a dreadful storm was coming up, and this favored him. People were rushing home to escape the storm. He barely had time to get to the depot before the storm burst. So in the general confusion he had not attracted notice. He wrote from Cincinnati that at the Rock Island depot that night, in obeying my instructions, he sat off by himself. When the ticket office opened, still he did not move. An officer from the island came up to him. George thought all was over for him when the officer said: "Have you bought your ticket, Miss?" "No, sir," he replied in a frightened feminine voice. "Train will soon leave. Give me your money and destination, and I will assist you." The supposed young lady, with a gasp of relief and a sigh of satisfaction, said: "Chicago and Cincinnati." In a hurried, bustling, business tone the officer said: "You had better get a through ticket to Cincinnati." This he kindly bought, and gave it and the change to the young lady (?), who gladly got away.

After he had returned to his home, in Bourbon County, Ky., and exchanged his dress for his own clothes, he was in Paris, Ky., one day when Yankee soldiers arrested him.



Instantly he again assumed the rôle of a half-witted unfortunate. They let him go, and he hurried to Dixie.

When I read this paper before the Henrietta Hunt Morgan Chapter, U. D. C., January 31, 1901, Mrs. Arnold, who is from Bourbon County, Ky., exclaimed: "O, I heard of that boy George Kern's being dressed up in girl's clothes." Just before he reached home he was arrested by some Yankee soldiers. They questioned him and among other things asked: "Who is your father?" He replied: "Why, Paw." "Who is your mother?" "Why, Maw." "O!" said one of the men, "she is a fool; let her go." They actually thought from the way he (or she) acted that he was idiotic, so let him go. He got through the lines, returned to his regiment, and served well afterwards. A comrade who lives in Paris, Ky., tells of him. We cannot find him, but this comrade thinks he is somewhere in Texas.

We had expected trouble, but heard nothing till two days after. I was called to the door, and found there a United States officer, and to my consternation as I glanced down at the gate I saw a squad of soldiers, with guns gleaming. Like George, I thought *my* time had come; but not a muscle quivered, and I controlled my countenance. My excitement found escape in exquisite politeness. I invited the officer in, regretting profusely my cousin's absence. He declined. I saw he meant business. He said: "It is not Mrs. Boyle. Miss Perry; it is *you* I want to see." "O, indeed, sir! What can I do for you?" He replied: "I am going to ask you a question, and I want you to answer it truthfully. A prisoner has escaped. Have you seen one either yesterday or to-day?" I looked that man straight in the eye and replied: "Sir, I have not, either yesterday or to-day." God knows I told the truth, and there was a jubilee in my heart that I could say this and tell the truth. George Kern had gone the day *before* yesterday. Had he timed his question in that manner, I do not know how I should have answered, for I will not soil my soul with a *lie*.

At once I sternly *demand*ed that he call his men and search that house. He said: "No; I see you are telling me the truth." With growing indignation I insisted, but he refused.

I asked to be excused one instant. I knew the gardener had been cutting grapes. I had the maid pile a large tray *full*, take it to the door, and offer some to the officer; then had him call one of his men, who took it to the gate and passed the grapes around. A more pleased and delighted group of men you never saw. A soldier always feels complimented by thoughtful notice. Evidently I had by this little attention made friends with all. That officer apologized to me for coming.

The reason George Kern's escape was not sooner known was that he was always declaring he intended leaving. The sergeant who cared for his barrack had heard this so often that finally he began twitting him in this wise: "Why, hello, George! Good morning! Not gone yet?" So when he did escape, the sergeant thought George was hiding, hoping to get him to search and so laugh back at him. This was why two days were lost by the authorities and gained by us. When it dawned upon the sergeant that George was gone sure enough, then he reported and the search was taken up, but George by that time was scot-free.

*\* found*  
*- still*  
*living*  
Another prisoner who escaped and came to me was David H. Ross, of Company C, 8th Georgia, who lived at Rome, Ga. ~~He is dead now.~~ I was now watched so closely that the situation became most difficult and dangerous. So I was extremely cautious, and put him through a severe cross-examination in regard to things he could not know unless he were true and belonged to the initiated on the inside. He told me how he had escaped. The hospital ambulance was sent in daily for those who were too ill to remain inside. The doctors made their rounds every day to see who should go out. Mr. Ross put on a citizen's suit he had procured, over it a Yankee blue suit, and over that he wrapped a big gray blanket. Just before the ambulance passed out he seated himself on the rough margin of a macadamized street—he chose a rough spot purposely. As the ambulance passed and Jehu was looking ahead, he leaped into the ambulance at the back. The sick soldiers had been previously warned, and made no outcry. In a moment he was outside the prison walls. Leaving his blanket in the ambulance, he dropped to

the ground a *bluc* man, crossed the Slough, shed the blue, became a citizen, and thus reached our house.

When we became satisfied that he was really what he represented himself to be, he was given money and clothing, and off he too went in safety. I heard from him in Canada and several times after he rejoined his regiment in the South.

One of his friends, J. B. Foster, of Barrack 47, had agreed to answer at roll call for Mr. Ross. The roll caller for Barrack 47 would take the word of a prisoner's friends that he was sick; but the roll caller in Mr. Ross's barrack would look into the bunk of a man reported sick. Mr. Foster would draw his blanket up close, so that his face was hidden, and for three days he thus deceived the roll caller; while his comrades in his own barrack reported him sick. Then he answered in Barrack 47, and so far as the guards knew Ross had just escaped.

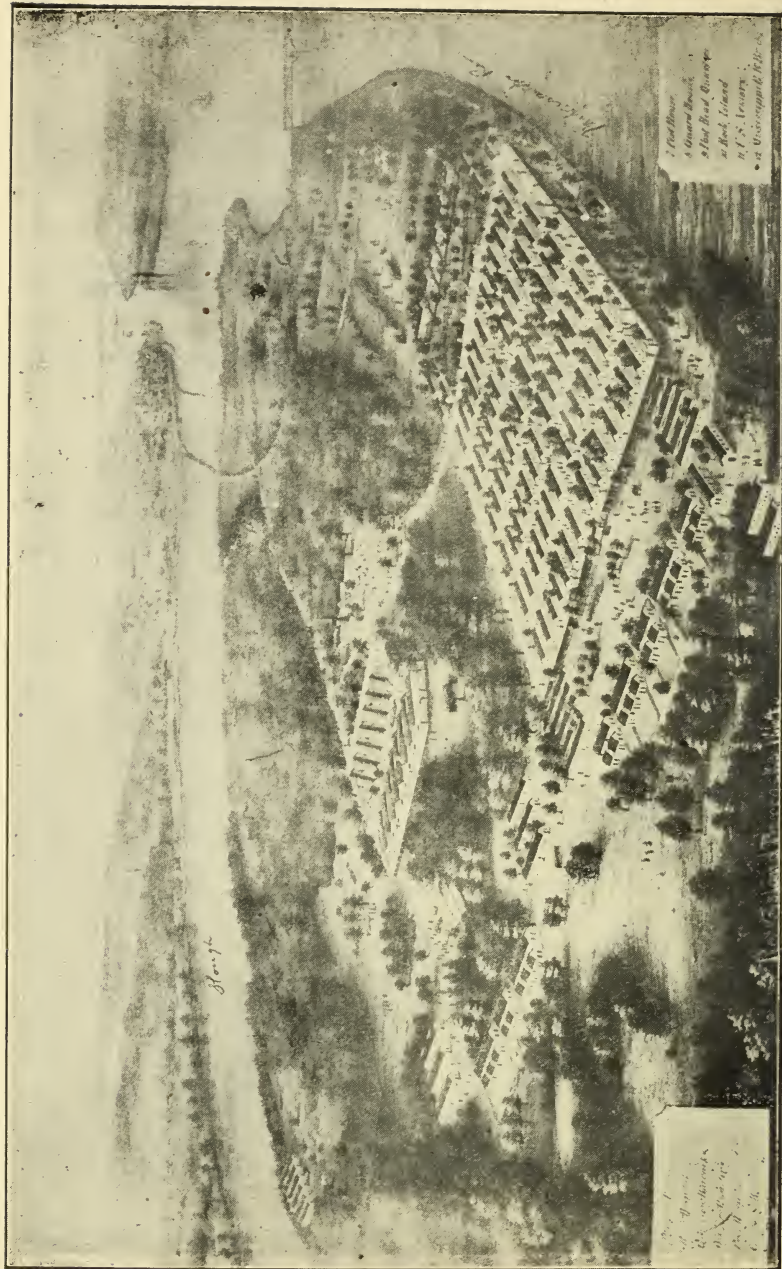
Few traces of the prison days remain at Rock Island now. The whole island is changed, but while life lasts the pictures there photographed upon memory will live: The island, the prison, the sorrow felt for the poor men, and the memory of the graves of the valiant dead who were shot, frozen, starved, or died of disease. Although the prison gates were opened wide for all to go free in July, 1865, *all* who had entered there came not away. Two thousand Confederate soldiers sleep, side by side, far from friends and home. Two thousand lives that were precious to some one passed over to the other shore, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung," without hearing again the voices of beloved ones or gazing "once more" upon their familiar faces when life's vespers rang.

Upon the very ground where the Confederate hospital stood, where so many suffered and died, now stand the massive shops of the largest, finest, and most thoroughly equipped arsenal owned by the United States. As it stands to-day it has cost more than \$9,000,000. I cannot but feel that over the graves of our Confederate dead resting there, are sung from the flaming throats of the thunderous forges fierce battle cries, and wrung from the clanging of the ponderous machinery, echoed by the jangling implements of war, a melody which serves as their lullaby!

So sleep the deathless dead, but not alone, for the poet  
says:

Wherever the brave have died,  
They should not rest apart.  
Living, they struggled side by side.  
Why should the hand of death divide  
A single heart from heart?" ~~— [scribble] —~~

x Father Ryan, the Poet, Priest &  
Confederate Soldier



LANDSCAPE ABOUT ROCK ISLAND, MISS., INCLUDING THE CONFEDERATE PRISON.









